

Potential Health Risks With Imported Drugs

- **Quality assurance concerns.** Medications that have not been approved for sale in the United States may not have been manufactured under quality assurance procedures designed to produce a safe and effective product.
- **Counterfeit potential.** Some imported medications--even those that bear the name of a U.S.-approved product--may, in fact, be counterfeit versions that are unsafe or even completely ineffective.
- **Presence of untested substances.** Imported medications and their ingredients, although legal in foreign countries, may not have been evaluated for safety and effectiveness in the United States. These products may be addictive or contain other dangerous substances.
- **Risks of unsupervised use.** Some medications, whether imported or not, are unsafe when taken without adequate medical supervision. You may need a medical evaluation to ensure that the medication is appropriate for you and your condition. Or, you may require medical checkups to make sure that you are taking the drug properly, it is working for you and that you are not having unexpected or life-threatening side effects.
- **Labeling and language issues.** The medication's label, including instructions for use and possible side effects, may be in a language you do not understand or may make medical claims and suggest specific uses that have not been adequately evaluated for safety and effectiveness.
- **Lack of information.** An imported medication may lack information that would permit you to be promptly and correctly treated for a dangerous side effect caused by the drug.

http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2002/502_import.html

Carla Bauman, M.D.
Susan Duffy, PA-C